

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4740

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MOPS, TH, CB

SUBJ: DEPUTY FONMIN CHARTCHAI ON U.S. PRESENCE AND MILITARY
AID LEVELS

REF: BANGKOK 10131

1. SUMMARY: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARTCCHAI IN A
JULY 11 PRESS CONFERENCE STATED THAT U.S. FORCES
IN THAILAND WOULD HAVE TO BE REDUCED SHOULD THERE
BE A CESSATION OF U.S. BOMBING IN CAMBODIA. HE
SAID THAT U.S. WITHDRAWALS WOULD BE GRADUAL UNTIL
NO TROOPS WERE LEFT. HE ALSO MENTIONED THAT MILITARY AID
WOULD BE REDUCED THOUGH NOT ENDED. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN EXCERPTS: REPORTER: HAVE WE MADE ANY DECISION
YET REGARDING THE REDUCTION OF AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES IN THAILAND?

CHARTCHAI: SHOULD THERE BE A CESSATION OF BOMBING THE
STRENGTH OF AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES WOULD HAVE TO BE REDUCED.

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REPORTER: IN WHAT PROPORTION WOULD THEY BE REDUCED:

CHARTCHAI: I DON'T KNOW YET. THEIR WITHDRAWAL BY GRADUAL STAGES WOULD CONCERN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, NOT BE MY RESPONSIBILITY. OUR POLICY IS: SHOULD THERE BE A CEASEFIRE AND SHOULD FIGHTING BE ENDED AND SHOULD THERE BE A COMPLETE CESSATION OF BOMBING, THE STRENGTH OF MILITARY FORCES WOULD BE REDUCED. THIS IS OUR POLICY.

REPORTER: THEY WOULD MOST PROBABLY NOT BE COMPLETELY WITHDRAWN. IS THAT CORRECT?

CHARTCHAI: THEY WOULD BE WITHDRAWN BY GRADUAL STAGES UNTIL NONE ARE LEFT.

REPORTER: WOULD THAT INCLUDE MILITARY ADVISERS ALSO?

CHARTCHAI: MILITARY AID WOULD HAVE TO BE REDUCED TO SOME EXTENT. YOU SHOULD TRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT IT WOULD BE SHOULD MILITARY AID BE COMPLETELY ENDED. AN EASY EXAMPLE THAT CAN BE CITED IS THAT MILITARY AID GIVEN US AT PRESENT IS IN THE FORM OF AMERICAN WEAPONS, GUNS CANNON, AND AMMUNITION. SHOULD WE STOP USING THESE WEAPONS IT WOULD MEAN THAT THE TRAINING OF OUR ARMED FORCES WOULD HAVE TO BE COMPLETELY CHANGED. THE TRAINING OF OUR ARMED FORCES REQUIRES A HUGH SUM OF MONEY, AND THOUGH THE FINANCIAL AID GIVEN US OF 300 MILLION (BAHT) IS ONLY ONE PER CENT OF THE BUDGET IT IS OF MUCH GREATER VALUE THAN 300 MILLION. OTHERWISE WE WOULD HAVE TO COMPLETELY CHANGE EVERYTHING FOR OUR ARMED FORCES, WHICH WOULD BE UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE. WE ARE AN AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY THEREFORE IT WOULD BE MOST DIFFICULT TO COMPLETELY CHANGE AND REBUILD OUR ARMED FORCES WITHOUT SOMEBODY TO HELP US. IN OTHER WORDS, IF NOT HELP IS GIVEN US WE CANNOT CHANGE OUR WEAPONS BECAUSE IT TAKES AS LONG AS 10 YEARS TO DRAFT PLANS FOR THE TRAINING OF OUR ARMED FORCES AND TO TRAIN OUR MEN, WHO HAVE TO BE TRAINED FROM OFFICERS DOWN TO SERVICEMEN, NOT SERVICEMEN ONLY. THEREFORE, SHOULD WE ASK AMERICA TO PULL OUT AND REFUSE TO ACCEPT AID THE FORM OF WEAPONS, WHERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COULD WE OBTAIN NEW WEAPONS FOR OUR ARMED FORCES?

REPORTER: ARE NEGOTIATIONS AND GARGAINING BEING HELD IN REGARD TO WEAPONS THAT ARE LEFT OVER AND BEING OFFERED US?

CHARTCHAI: WE DON'T WANT LEFT OVER WEAPONS BECAUSE THEY ARE SECOND-HAND AND USED WEAPONS. I HAVE EMPHASIZED THROUGHOUT THAT WE WANT NEW WEAPONS AND I HAVE ASKED

FOR NEW WEAPONS THROUGHOUT. END EXCERPTS.

3. COMMENT: CHARTCHAI'S PUBLIC COMMENTS ON U.S. TROOP
WITHDRAWALS REFLECT PRIVATE THINKING AMONG
KEY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS REPORTED IN
REFTEL. CHARTCHAI'S COMMENTS ON MILITARY AID ARE MORE
DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET, BUT MAY BE A WAY OF AQUIESCING TO
THE INEVITABLE REDUCTIONS THAT SEEM TO LIE AHEAD.
MASTERS

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